

IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows:

Claims 1-24 (Canceled).

Claim 25 (Previously Presented): A paper processing apparatus including a process mechanism for applying a predetermined process to a paper sheet after forming an image, the paper processing apparatus comprising:

a stack mechanism for stacking paper sheets;

a first alignment mechanism for aligning a paper bundle stacked in said stack mechanism;

a first convey mechanism for conveying a paper bundle aligned by said first alignment mechanism;

a second alignment mechanism for aligning the paper bundle conveyed by said first convey mechanism;

a second convey mechanism, for conveying the paper bundle aligned by said second alignment mechanism;

a folding mechanism for folding the paper bundle;

a first press contact force applying/releasing mechanism for applying a press contact force to a paper bundle regarding said first convey mechanism and for releasing the application of the press contact force; and

a second press contact force applying/releasing mechanism for applying a press contact force to a paper bundle regarding said second convey mechanism and for releasing the application of the press contact force,

wherein the second alignment mechanism is configured to align the paper bundle conveyed by the first convey mechanism in a vicinity of a folding position to fold the paper bundle,

wherein the second convey mechanism is configured to convey the paper bundle aligned by the second alignment mechanism to the folding position, and

wherein the folding mechanism is configured to fold the aligned paper bundle at the folding position.

Claim 26 (Previously Presented): A paper processing apparatus including a process mechanism for applying a predetermined process to a paper sheet after forming an image, the paper processing apparatus comprising:

a stack mechanism for stacking paper sheets;

a first alignment mechanism for aligning a paper bundle stacked in said stack mechanism;

a first convey mechanism for conveying a paper bundle aligned by said first alignment mechanism;

a binding mechanism for applying the binding process to a paper bundle;

a second alignment mechanism for aligning the paper bundle which is bound by said binding mechanism and conveyed by said first convey mechanism;

a second convey mechanism for conveying the paper bundle aligned by said second alignment mechanism;

a folding mechanism for folding the paper bundle;

a first press contact force applying/releasing mechanism for applying a press contact force to a paper bundle regarding said first convey mechanism and for releasing the application of the press contact force; and

a second press contact force applying/releasing mechanism for applying a press contact force to a paper bundle regarding said second convey mechanism and for releasing the application of the press contact force,

wherein the second alignment mechanism is configured to align the paper bundle conveyed by the first convey mechanism in a vicinity of a folding position to fold the paper bundle,

wherein the second convey mechanism is configured to convey the paper bundle aligned by the second alignment mechanism to the folding position, and

wherein the folding mechanism is configured to fold the aligned paper bundle at the folding position.

Claim 27 (Original): A paper processing apparatus as claimed in Claim 26, wherein said first alignment mechanism is equipped with a first paper bundle controlling mechanism for aligning the paper bundle stacked by said stack mechanism in the paper feed direction by touching the downstream end of the paper bundle thereto and an alignment member for aligning the paper bundle in the direction perpendicular to the paper feed direction by touching the paper bundle in the direction perpendicular to the feed direction.

Claim 28 (Original): A paper processing apparatus as claimed in Claim 25, wherein said second alignment mechanism is equipped with a second bundle control mechanism for aligning the paper bundle conveyed by said first convey mechanism in the vicinity of the folding position by touching the downstream end of the paper bundle in the paper feed direction.

Claim 29 (Previously Presented): A paper processing apparatus as claimed in Claim 27, wherein said first alignment mechanism is equipped with a first control releasing mechanism for releasing the control by said first paper bundle control mechanism.

Claim 30 (Previously Presented): A paper processing apparatus as claimed in Claim 28, wherein said second alignment mechanism is equipped with a second control releasing mechanism for releasing the control by said second paper bundle control mechanism.

Claim 31 (Original): A paper processing apparatus as claimed in Claim 28, wherein said second paper bundle control mechanism and said second convey mechanism are disposed downstream in the paper bundle feed direction with respect to said folding position.

Claim 32 (Original): A paper processing apparatus as claimed in Claim 25, wherein the feed line includes a curved portion, which is disposed downstream in the paper bundle feed direction relative to said folding position.

Claim 33 (Canceled).

Claim 34 (Original): A paper processing apparatus as claimed in Claim 28, further comprising: a second control releasing mechanism for releasing the control by said second paper bundle control mechanism; a second press contact force applying/releasing mechanism for applying a press contact to the paper bundle regarding said second convey mechanism and for releasing the application of the press contact force; and a control mechanism for controlling said first and second convey mechanism, said second control releasing mechanism and said second press contact force applying/releasing mechanism; wherein when

the downstream end of the paper bundle in the paper feed direction is adjusted by said second paper bundle control mechanism, said control mechanism applies a press contact force to the paper bundle regarding said second convey mechanism by said second press contact applying/releasing mechanism, before releasing the control of said second paper bundle control mechanism by at least said second control releasing mechanism.

Claim 35 (Original): A paper processing apparatus as claimed in Claim 34, wherein said control mechanism maintains the press contact force provided by said second convey mechanism when the paper bundle is folded by said folding mechanism.

Claim 36 (Previously Presented): An image forming system comprising:

- a paper processing apparatus including a process mechanism for applying a predetermined process to a paper sheet after image formation; and
- an image forming apparatus mounted either as a unit or in a separated unit on said paper processing apparatus;

wherein said paper processing apparatus includes,

- a stack mechanism for stacking paper sheets;
- a first alignment mechanism for aligning a paper bundle stacked by said stack mechanism;
- a first convey mechanism for conveying the paper bundle aligned by said first alignment mechanism;
- a second alignment mechanism for aligning the paper bundle conveyed by the first convey mechanism;
- a second convey mechanism for conveying the paper bundle aligned by said second alignment mechanism;

a folding mechanism for folding the paper bundle;

a first press contact force applying/releasing mechanism for applying a press contact force to a paper bundle regarding said first convey mechanism and for releasing the application of the press contact force; and

a second press contact force applying/releasing mechanism for applying a press contact force to a paper bundle regarding said second convey mechanism and for releasing the application of the press contact force,

wherein the second alignment mechanism is configured to align the paper bundle conveyed by the first convey mechanism in a vicinity of a folding position to fold the paper bundle,

wherein the second convey mechanism is configured to convey the paper bundle aligned by the second alignment mechanism to the folding position, and

wherein the folding mechanism is configured to fold the aligned paper bundle at the folding position.

Claim 37 (Currently Amended): A paper processing method for applying a predetermined process to [[the]] paper ~~sheet~~ sheets on each of which [[the]] image formation is carried out, comprising the following steps of:

forming a paper bundle by stacking paper sheets;

performing first alignment of aligning said paper bundle thus stacked;

performing first conveyance of a paper bundle aligned by the first alignment;

performing second alignment of the paper bundle conveyed by the first conveyance;

performing second conveyance of the paper bundle aligned by the second alignment;

~~aligning said paper bundle in a vicinity of a folding position to fold the paper bundle after conveying said paper bundle thus aligned;~~

~~conveying said paper bundle aligned in the vicinity of the folding position to said folding position;~~

folding said paper bundle at said folding position;

applying a press contact force to the paper bundle regarding said first conveyance and releasing the application of the press contact force by a first press contact force applying/releasing mechanism; and

applying a press contact force to the paper bundle regarding said second conveyance and releasing the application of the press contact force by a second press contact force applying/releasing mechanism.

~~a first press contact force applying/releasing mechanism for applying a press contact force to a paper bundle regarding said first convey mechanism and for releasing the application of the press contact force; and~~

~~a second press contact force applying/releasing mechanism for applying a press contact force to a paper bundle regarding said second convey mechanism and for releasing the application of the press contact force.~~